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The Responsible Thinking Process (RTP)

A Practical Explanation for Community, Staff, and Students

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Please note:

The purpose of this “practical explanation” is to offer community members, staff, and students a quick overview of the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP), the behavioral system that was researched by MHS staff and chosen by the MHS staff above and beyond several other behavioral systems.

This practical explanation, then, is not meant to serve as an RTP manual; rather, it is meant to serve as a starting point for on-going dialogue regarding how best to prepare students for life—to be responsible thinkers who are able to get what they want in life without stepping on the rights of others.

Please write your new plan.

Will you keep other students or your teacher from doing what they are trying to do if you follow your plan? Yes No

Please explain. _____

What is different about this plan from your other plans? _____

What is your plan to make up the school work you have missed? _____

If you want help, where or from whom can you get it? _____

How can the person in charge of where you were disrupting help you with your plan?

Are you really serious about working on your plan? Yes No

Will a monitor sheet or chart help with your plan? Yes No

If so, create a chart or monitor sheet that will help you keep a daily record of how you are doing.

student's signature

RTC supervisor's signature

person in charge of where
disruption took place

parent's signature
(when necessary)

Once you have negotiated this plan with the person who was in charge of the place where you were disrupting, and that person has signed the plan, return this plan to the principal/designee.

Sample Plan

Student Plan – Responsible Thinking Classroom

Name:

Date:

What would the person who was in charge of where you came from say you were doing?

What was the first question the person asked you?

What was your answer to the question?

What would you say you were doing?

What is the rule that you broke?

At the time you broke the rule, did that keep other students from doing things they were trying to do? Yes No

What were some of the things you kept them from doing? _____

Did you keep the person in charge from doing something? Yes No

What was the person trying to do? _____

When a person is called responsible, what does this mean?

What are the good things about being a responsible person?

What things don't you like about being a responsible person?

Would you say that you are responsible (circle one)

most of the time half of the time very little of the time

Would you like to work on a plan that would help you become more responsible?

Yes No

How many times have you written a plan to become more responsible? _____

How will the person where you disrupted know you are serious about working on a plan to be responsible? _____

Why RTP?

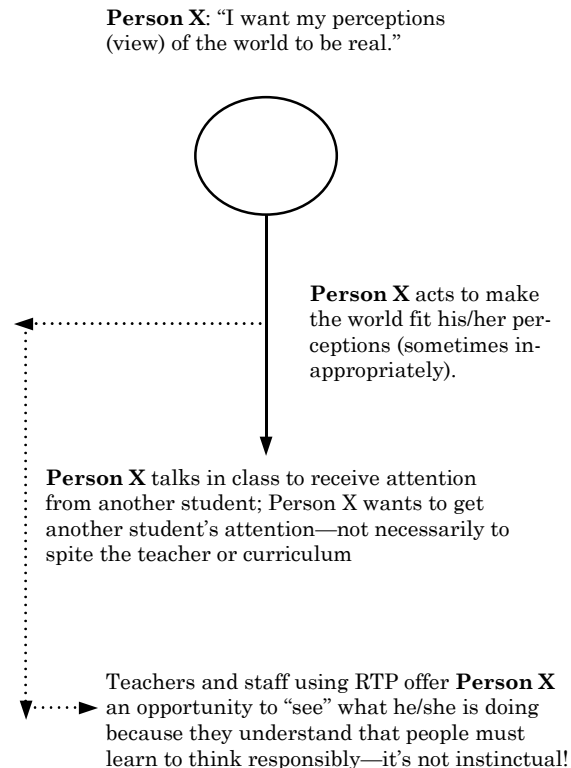
The Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) shares some similarities to many of the behavioral systems available to schools; however, it is different in several important areas because it involves:

- Theory
- “Language”
- Process
- Practical applications

Most other behavioral systems contain one or two of the above characteristics but generally not all of them. As a result, the MHS staff opted for RTP. In addition, a modified version of RTP was piloted with freshmen during the 2006-2007 school year. The informal response from community members, staff, and students to RTP was favorable.

The Theory

RTP is based upon a theory that explains why and how people behave; it is called Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), which was developed by William T. Powers. In brief:



Appendix D: Intervention Choices

Choices: Sending a student to the RTC is, of course, a step that is taken when a student refuses the process. However, there are some intermediate intervention choices for students, too:

- “In-class” RTC: when a student does not refuse the process but is still in need of space to reorganize, a portion of a classroom can be used. After some time has passed, the teacher asks the student the questions again. If the student is willing to work on his/her behavior, he/she is invited back into the area in which students are actively learning.
- “Hallway” RTC: some students do not necessarily refuse the process, but they clearly need time to reorganize because they fall apart emotionally in certain situations. (Sometimes, teachers need a few minutes to reorganize, too.) When the “hallway” RTC intervention is used, it is not meant to be the equivalent of being banished to Siberia. Meeting with the student who disrupted in a timely manner is important because students learning and teachers teaching are what school!

Appendix C: Negotiation

Negotiation is probably the most critical piece of RTP: it is the time during which the teacher and the student have the time to repair the relationship. After school on Tuesday after Johnny was sent to the RTC because he did not want to work with the teacher:

Johnny: (Appears in the teacher's classroom after school with a plan in his hand.)

Teacher: "Hello, Johnny, may we talk?"

Johnny: "I guess so."

Teacher: "What happened yesterday?"

Johnny: "Everyone was talking—not just me."

Teacher: "What were you doing, again?"

Johnny: "Well, I was talking, too."

Teacher: "What do you want, Johnny?"

Johnny: "To pass . . ."

Teacher: "OK, let's take a look at that."

Note: Negotiation is not meant to be simply a confession and then forgiveness. Rather, negotiation is the process of understanding the disruption, repairing the relationship, providing appropriate support, gaining a commitment, and then agreeing to follow a plan to foster responsible thinking.

The "Language" of RTP

Historically, schools have used the "threat/reward" behavioral system; as a result, the "language" of behavior has been some type of promise of things to come—good or bad. RTP, on the other hand, uses a language to teach responsible thinking; it does not promise extra benefits or punishments, nor is its purpose to explore the "why" of classroom disruptions. If a student disrupts . . .

What are you doing?

What are the rules?

What happens when you break the rules?

Is this what you want to happen?

What do you want to do now?

What will happen if you disrupt again?

Note: the questions are meant to focus on the "what" and offer the student a chance to "reorganize" his/her thinking!

RTP, a Full-Circle Process

Within the Responsible Thinking Process, students enter into a “learning process” if they disrupt; they are taught the skills needed for successful entry into adulthood.

1. **Person X** disrupts in class.
2. The person in charge (teacher) asks **Person X** the RTP questions.
3. **Person X** does not want to work on solving what happened.
4. The teacher lets **Person X** know he/she needs to report to the Responsible Thinking Classroom (RTC).
5. Once there, **Person X** is given the opportunity to write an RTP Plan; the RTC Supervisor will offer assistance.
6. **Person X** stays in the RTC only for the hour during which he/she disrupted. **Person X** must negotiate his/her plan with the teacher before or after school.
7. If negotiation is successful, and the teacher “signs off” on the plan, the student returns to class the next day after he/she drops off the signed plan in the RTC.
8. **Person X** may not return to the class in which he/she disrupted until the negotiation and sign off have occurred. Until that happens, **Person X** reports to the RTC for the hour in which he/she disrupted.

Appendix B: “Map” to RTP

1. Johnny Doe disrupts class; he refuses to “work with” the teacher (RTP questions).
2. Johnny is sent to the Responsible Thinking Classroom (RTC); he enters the RTC, signs in, and is given a plan; **RTC Supervisor (B. Loudermill)** sends e-mail to sending teacher and assists student if he needs help. Johnny leaves when dismissed to go to his next class in which he has not disrupted.
3. If Johnny meets with the teacher before or after school, and the negotiation is successful (teacher signature included), he returns the plan to the RTC and goes back to class.
4. If Johnny makes numerous appearances in the RTC or is sluggish negotiating his plan, B. Loudermill will contact **P. Kurdziel** and **E. Jones (freshmen)**, **J. Schulze (sophomores)**, or **T. Lewis (juniors and seniors)**. At that point, the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) will be called—specialist (initiates team meeting), administrator, counselor, TC, and any other appropriate staff members including parents. The purpose of the CIT is find out what kind of support Johnny needs and—ultimately—to what Johnny is willing to commit.
5. Teachers, please send schoolwork to the RTC (when possible).
6. Major policy violations will go through **P. Kurdziel (freshmen)** or **D. Cook (sophomores, juniors, and seniors)**.

Appendix A: RTP Phone Call

Situation: Johnny Doe has had trouble lately in class. He has been agreeable to the redirection you have initiated with the RTP questions; however, you feel it is just “a matter of time” before he goes too far. A phone call home is completely appropriate—especially since you are looking to help Johnny Doe learn to be a responsible thinker.

You: “Hello, Mrs. Doe? My name is Mr. _____, and I have Johnny in my English class. Lately, he seems to have a hard time paying attention. Have you been experiencing any of this at home?”

Mrs. Doe: “No, he’s great at home—no problems.”

You: “I see. Here’s what I have observed . . . Right now, his grade is 50%, and I am concerned about his success. Would you be willing to come to school and meet with Johnny and me, so we can put our heads together to figure out what kind of support Johnny needs, and to figure out what he is willing to commit to doing?”

Mrs. Doe: “Sure. When?”

Note: Clearly contrived? Yes. The absence of blaming, however, is the key!

RTP, a Full-Circle Process

Frequently Asked Questions about the RTC at MHS:

How long can a student stay in the RTC?

He/she will report to the RTC for the hour during which he/she disrupted until negotiation and sign off have occurred. However, the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)—administrator or designee, counselor, and (potentially parents)—will be notified if a student receives multiple referrals and/or makes no attempt to negotiate his/her plan. When necessary, CIT meetings with parents will be required to discuss the ways in which the student needs support.

Isn’t the RTC just another way of having an in-school-suspension-room?

No, students are given the opportunity to learn to think responsibly whenever they are ready. The students only report to the RTC for the hour during which the disruption occurred. Finally, CIT members are called in to problem solve with students who seem to frequent the RTC or are reluctant to negotiate with teachers.

What if the student’s plan is wrong?

Any successful relationship is built upon negotiation. Therefore, the negotiation period between staff and students is critical: it is the time when two people can meet to problem solve to get what they both want.

Practical Applications

1. Building strong relationships between community members, staff, and students is critical; RTP facilitates relationship building. Students who think responsibly and know how to build healthy relationships will reach their goals—educationally and professionally.
2. Students learn to think responsibly, a critical life skill.
3. Everyone knows the process.
4. The process is straight forward: no “special knowledge” is needed to learn the process.
5. RTP can be applied anywhere: home, the workplace, church, clubs, etc.
6. RTP resources are available here at MHS in the library. Please see Ms. Brenda Suttor, media specialist, for information (or call her at 720-2804).
7. RTP website: <http://www.responsiblethinking.com>

Responding to Electronic Devices: An RTP Example

Monday morning, front hallway: teacher meets student with electronic device.

Scenario A

“Good morning, sir, the headphones need to be out of sight.”

“Oh, Ok.” (They are put away.)

“Thanks.”

Scenario B

“Good morning, sir, the headphones need to be out of sight.”

“Man, come on.” (Starts to walk away.)

“Sir, what’s happening right now?”

“Nothing.”

“What about the headphones?”

“OK, whatever.” (Puts them away.)

“Thanks.”

Scenario C

“Good morning, sir, the headphones need to be out of sight.”

“Man, come on.” (Starts to walk away.)

“Sir, what’s happening right now?”

“Nothing.”

“What about the headphones?”

“I’ll take ‘em off when I get to my locker.”

“What is the rule for electronic devices?”

“Man, I said I’d take ‘em off! Chill out!”

“Do you want to work on this?”

“Whatever!”

“You will need to see _____ about this in the RTC.”*

*Refer student to appropriate administrative staff member working as RTC supervisor..